

VAMP

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E-004976



## Memorandum

Date: March 2, 1999  
To: CALFED Policy Group  
From: Lester A. Snow *Mary Celline for*  
Subject: Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP)

### Summary

The proposed Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP) has been the subject of a number of stakeholder and agency meetings since the last Policy Group meeting on February 4. Assemblyman Michael Machado has played a central role in these discussions, with the goal of linking progress on VAMP implementation and funding with demonstrable progress on CALFED's efforts to advance planning for regional water quality, flow, stage, and fisheries improvements. Those discussions are continuing during the week of March 1 and an update on progress will be provided at the March 10 Policy Group meeting.

### Action Required – Information Item Only

### Detailed Discussion

The following background information was included in the February 4 packet, and is repeated here for ease of reference:

Both the 1994 Bay-Delta Accord and the 1995 Water Quality Control Plan called for higher flows on the San Joaquin River at Vernalis during the April 15 through May 15 period and the placement of a barrier at the Head of Old River (HOR barrier) during the same period to aid outmigrating salmon smolts from the San Joaquin River watershed.

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#### CALFED Agencies

**California**  
The Resources Agency  
Department of Fish and Game  
Department of Water Resources  
California Environmental Protection Agency  
State Water Resources Control Board

**Federal**  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Department of the Interior  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bureau of Reclamation  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Department of Commerce  
National Marine Fisheries Service

The major water rights holders on the San Joaquin River and its tributaries (The San Joaquin River Group Authority) proposed VAMP to gather data to improve the long-term scientific understanding of the effects of San Joaquin River flow, CVP and SWP Delta export operations and the operation of the Head of Old River Barrier on San Joaquin salmon. SJRGA believes that this knowledge must be gained in advance of any full or partial implementation of additional flow requirement obligations on San Joaquin River water rights holders and that VAMP provides "equivalent or better" protection than the higher flows on the San Joaquin River at Vernalis specified in the Accord and the 1995 Water Quality Control Plan.

According to SJRGA, the increased flows on the San Joaquin River at Vernalis during the April 15- May 15 period proposed in VAMP will be achieved by purchasing water from willing sellers within the SJRGA. The water purchased would be made available through a combination of increased agricultural water use efficiency and water transfers within the SJRGA and the development of various local conjunctive use programs. The annual payment of \$4 million to SJRGA is intended to promote these activities. However, SJRGA has not made any commitment to undertake the specific measures proposed.

SJRGA's analysis of the effects of VAMP indicates there will not be any significant adverse impacts to downstream water rights holders in the south and central Delta. However, the South Delta Water Agency and Central Delta Water Agency believe that SJRGA's analysis is flawed and that summer flow levels and water quality at Vernalis will diminish with VAMP. As such, they strongly oppose VAMP as currently proposed. The City of Stockton has also requested that the effects of VAMP on dissolved oxygen levels on the San Joaquin River be analyzed and disclosed.